

## RESULTS SUMMARY

A library of PSA materials is now available for agencies to use in their winter maintenance messaging to encourage safe driver behavior during winter weather operations.

MAY 2026

# PSA RESOURCES FOR WINTER MAINTENANCE OUTREACH

## Need for Research

Public service announcements (PSAs) are a valuable tool for winter maintenance agencies to provide critical information and guidance to the driving public. Historically, PSA campaigns require significant time and resources to develop and distribute effectively. Leveraging previously successful campaigns can help guide PSA design and development to better communicate winter maintenance operations and best practices, while leveraging newer methods, like social media campaigns, allows for quicker turnaround.

To provide agencies with the tools and resources needed to effectively communicate information related to winter weather travel, this project identified areas of need and developed short-format videos, fact sheets, posters, infographics and dynamic message sign messages to educate the public on winter maintenance operations and safety practices. The project deliverables provide winter maintenance agencies with customizable PSA materials that they can use as needed.

## Objectives and Methodology

The purpose of this project was to create a library of PSA communication products intended to help agencies develop their own campaigns and raise public awareness of winter maintenance operations and practices. To achieve this, a survey of winter maintenance staff collected information on existing winter maintenance PSAs and gathered feedback on topics in need of new PSA content. Feedback from professionals directly involved in winter maintenance operations provided valuable insight that informed the development of the PSA materials.

After reviewing existing winter maintenance PSA materials, investigators created a library of PSA content designed to be easily adaptable for use by individual agencies. The project also compiled an inventory of existing PSA materials from transportation agencies, summarized agency use of social media platforms and identified considerations for designing and executing successful PSA campaigns.

## PROJECT DETAILS

**Project Title:** Development of Public Service Announcements (PSA) Library

**Project Number:** CR23-01

**Project Cost:** \$149,957

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Clear, concise PSA messages relay valuable winter road condition information to the driving public, enhancing awareness and safety.

## Results

The literature review identified several best practices for successful PSA campaigns. PSAs should be simple, short (10 to 15 seconds), repeated frequently, and communicated across multiple platforms using both audio and visual methods. PSAs may also be designed to appeal to emotions—such as empathy or humor—to make messages more memorable. Campaigns should focus on increasing public awareness, changing attitudes and encouraging specific actions while tailoring messages to targeted audiences for maximum impact.

Additional considerations include:

- Use Public Information Officers and marketing teams with relevant PSA experience.
- Work with state DOT staff to leverage existing PSA campaigns and materials.
- Identify successful PSA content developed by other agencies to guide efforts.
- Use a peer or local personality rather than a national celebrity.
- Work with students or interns to assist in developing PSA campaigns.
- Create and track performance measures, such as visits, views or shares, to evaluate campaign success.

Building on these practices, investigators developed a PSA campaign centered on the theme of Partnership in Winter Road Safety that included branding and logos. To support the campaign, investigators developed PSA materials for the following topics:

- Thank you for keeping your distance (one 36-second and one 10-second video).
- When visibility is low, keep it slow.

- We're all in this together.
- Why do we spray liquids?

For “Why do we spray liquids?” investigators created versions with varying imagery, messaging and tag lines. Each video is accompanied by an editable working file that allows agencies to customize imagery, messaging and tag lines and add their agency logo.

An inventory of more than 250 existing transportation-related PSAs is included in Appendix B of the final report. These materials can serve as a valuable source for generating content ideas or may be used directly, with permission from the originating agency. Survey responses indicated that the most commonly used information-sharing platforms were Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, LinkedIn and Flickr.

## Benefits and Future Research

In addition to compiling an extensive inventory of existing winter maintenance PSAs, this project developed PSA logos, branding and media content that agencies can incorporate into their public communication efforts. By applying the recommendations and considerations identified through the research, agencies can maximize their resources when developing and promoting future PSA campaigns. For example, agencies may create multiple short versions of a PSA tailored to specific target audiences and social media platforms to improve overall effectiveness.

To help users understand the tool and make the most of it, researchers created a written manual and video tutorial. As the tool becomes more widely used, Clear Roads plans to track feedback from users and make minor adjustments as necessary.

“Effective winter maintenance communication is not about volume, it is about clarity, relatability and consistency. PSA success depends on messaging that is simple, personal and persuasive.”

Project Chair Danny Varilek

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